



AHCCCS today is a publication of the Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System Public Information Office.

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AHCCCS, IHS take 'historic' steps

AHCCCS and Indian Health Services have taken the first steps toward a unique AHCCCS health plan specifically for the Native American community.

Currently, AHCCCS pays providers for seeing eligible Native Americans on a fee-for-service basis. However, IHS can also pay providers for Native Americans not on AHCCCS. According to Julia Ysaguirre, AHCCCS Native American coordinator, this can get confusing for providers.

Under this new initiative, the AHCCCS' Division of Fee-for-Service Management would be the "administrative arm" of the plan, Ysaguirre said. The state's Advisory Council on Indian Health Care and tribal plans would work together on improving the current system for both providers and members.

"We're looking at getting better at this," she said. "Can we do better with private providers? Can we do a better job at educating members?"

The answer is, "of course," according to Ysaguirre.

AHCCCS, IHS and Native American community representatives are scheduled to meet this summer in Flagstaff for a second time and hope to have the new plan ready by the fall.

The new plan will operate similar to an AHCCCS contracted plan, although claims will still be paid on a fee-for-service basis and specific functions are still being developed.

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Community relations administrator moves to non-profit health clinics

Anna Alonzo, Community Relations Administrator for AHCCCS, is leaving the agency for a position with Mountain Park Community Health Centers.

Alonzo will be deputy director of the chain of non-profit health centers and will help administer the clinics in addition to doing community relations.

Mountain Park provides health care on a sliding scale basis and has several clinics in Phoenix, Tolleson and one planned for Tempe.



Anna Alonzo

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Jeannero leaves AHCCCS

Nan Jeannero, Health Plan Operations Manager in the Division of Health Care Management, is leaving AHCCCS in late June after 12 years for the private sector.

According to Kate Aurelius, DHCM assistant director, Nan has provided significant leadership in the evolution of excellent Medicaid managed care in Arizona.

"She has built the health plan Operation and Financial Review tool and process, developed mechanisms to assure review and analysis of health plan deliverables, and has been intimately involved in the acute care procurement process," Aurelius said.

Jeannero said, "It's been a great 12 years, especially having worked with all the great people in the program."

Public Information Office distributes CopperCard information at Expo

The AHCCCS Public Information Office distributed about 500 brochures and other material for Gov. Janet Napolitano's prescription drug card program at the Women's Expo

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Improved immunization a 'shot in the arm' for AHCCCS

More kids on AHCCCS are getting their shots, according to a 2004 immunization survey completed by the Division of Health Care Management.

And although the kids may not be too happy about that, DHCM is thrilled.

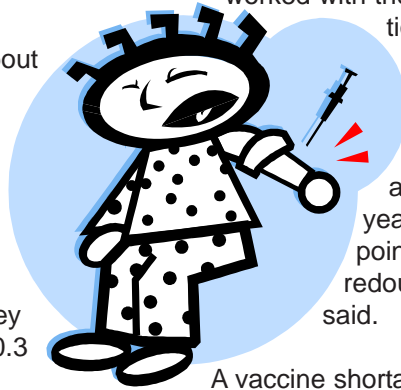
Compared to a 2003 survey, the number of two-year-old children getting the two major series of vaccinations has shown marked improvement.

Eighty percent of the 5,039 children in the survey received the 4:3:1 series of vaccinations and 70.3 percent received the 4:3:1:3:3 series.

These are the recommended vaccinations for children ages two and under. In 2003, the percentages were 73.8

and 59.3 percent, respectively.

"Because the rates declined for the 2003 contract year, we worked with the health plans to increase immunizations," said Kate Aurelius, DHCM assistant director. "This year has greatly improved."



AHCCCS is only required to complete an immunization survey every other year; DHCM wanted to recheck the disappointing 2003 numbers after health plans redoubled their vaccination efforts, Aurelius said.

A vaccine shortage was another reason for the low 2003 number, she said.

Work on Native American health plan underway

IHS, from page 1

The first meeting of AHCCCS and IHS representatives was held April 1 at AHCCCS Central Office in Phoenix. It was called historic by those involved because after more than twenty years, it was the first time the agencies had ever discussed identifying the current IHS/AHCCCS population as being enrolled in a health plan specifically designed to meet the needs of Native Americans.

This year also happens to be the 50th anniversary of IHS.

"AHCCCS is ready to embrace (a new system for Native American members)," said Dr. John Molina, AHCCCS medical director. "This is historic."

Topics like referral care, primary care, information technology, dental services, behavioral health and member management have been discussed at bi-weekly workgroup meetings since April and will continue throughout the summer.

"The workgroups consist of IHS and tribal representatives who are providing their ideas on process improvements and methods to improve access to care for Native American members," Ysaguirre said. "The AHCCCS administration is currently serving 120,000 Native Americans - this is the driving force behind wanting to make improvements."

Alonzo leaves AHCCCS

Alonzo, from page 1

"It's a great opportunity. There is so much to do to serve those who are in need of health care," she said. "I'm hoping to take the knowledge and experience I gained while employed by AHCCCS and apply it to Mountain Parks' vision for providing quality services."

Alonzo has been with AHCCCS a total of 14 years. She left once before for the city of Phoenix, but returned five years ago to do community relations.

"Anna and I go back a good many years at AHCCCS," said Frank Lopez, Public Information Officer. "She is one of a handful of very key people in the agency who are almost impossible to replace because the knowledge they take with them takes years to accumulate. I'll miss her, but I know her future is bright where she's going."

AHCCCS Web site logs more than a million hits in April

More than 1 million people visited the AHCCCS public Web site during the month of April, according to a report compiled by a Web data tracking service.

The site received 1,189,811 hits in April, with an average of 39,660 visitors each day. The home page was the most visited at 48.87 percent of the hits with the Plans and Providers page coming in second at 29.99 percent, according to the report. The Members and Applicants page came in third with 9.12 percent of the hits.

"The Web tracking service isn't an exact science, but it does show that there is a lot of people out there looking at AHCCCS," said Gary Gutierrez, ISD, AHCCCS web-master. "It also shows that providers look at the site more than members do, which makes sense when you think of the kinds of information plans and providers need from us on a regular basis."

And the state with the most number of hits in April? Not Arizona. Not California, Nevada or New Mexico.

It was Virginia.

Arizona came in second, with Phoenix the top city for hits. And, according to Office of the Director staff, there are no offices of the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services in Virginia.

"We're curious about getting so many hits from Virginia, particularly since so many are coming from the same part of the state," said Frank Lopez from PIO.

"There has to be a reason. We'll look into it if we get a chance."

And aside from the United States, Australia was the country with the most visits to the AHCCCS Web site. India, Canada, Norway and Sweden were also high on that list, according to the report.

"The report is good to have. It shows that our Web site is reaching people and helping get information out there," Lopez said.

Public Information Office hosts application training

What started with telling a few people about training for community organizations available through the AHCCCS Public Information Office has snowballed into some pretty large classes on everything from program basics to how to fill out an application.

But the interest in the classes is welcomed, according to AHCCCS Community Relations Administrator Anna Alonzo.

"We wanted to provide better customer service for our advocates and community people," she said. "We see that need for training - their staff want updates."

About 80 area community service workers attended a recent "AHCCCS 101" training class, which covers the fundamentals of AHCCCS programs. An application training session brought in about 30 people.

"We asked (community advocates) what they want training on and the response was 'Help us help people fill out the applications,'" Alonzo said. "In the future, we're hoping to have other workshops on citizenship, Medicare Cost Sharing and the Medicare Modernization Act."

AHCCCS staff from various divisions, including the Division of Member Services, lent a hand with the training, according to Lupe Solis-Campos of the Public Information Office, who helped coordinate the trainings.

"(DMS) KidsCare Spanish Unit did an awesome job explaining some of the barriers that the eligibility interviewers, client advocates, case managers and others experience," Solis-Campos said.

Training participants said they enjoyed the workshops and got a better glimpse into what AHCCCS workers go through, she said.

"We got a lot of positive comments from people. Not only are advocates being updated on AHCCCS programs and policy, we're working together to make the application process easier for our potential members," Solis-Campos said.

Even though Alonzo has left AHCCCS (see page 1), the PIO will continue fielding requests and direct them to the appropriate areas of the agency.



New system to aid process for homeless members

A new system for dealing with homeless AHCCCS members is in the works which could ease some claims issues and give homeless members a choice between being in a health plan or using a fee-for-service option.

"Because they are transient, the homeless may not go to their assigned primary care doctor," said Anna Alonzo, former AHCCCS community outreach administrator. "They might just show up at a homeless clinic which might not contract with their health plan."

Before leaving AHCCCS at the end of May, Alonzo worked extensively on homeless issues for the agency.

Figuring out who pays for the service can take time. Under the new system currently being devised, homeless members can choose to be in a plan or stay fee-for-service. With FFS, members can use any clinic.

"We want to streamline the process for homeless medical providers," she said.

A pilot project for the new system is scheduled for the near future and could include a way for applications of the homeless to be flagged in the computer. Details are still being worked out, Alonzo said.

This issue came to light as a part of the Governor's Council on the Homeless, which AHCCCS participates in, Alonzo said.

AHCCCS hosts Afghanistan group in May

Health care professionals from Afghanistan visited AHCCCS Central Office May 31 to learn about managed care and Medicaid.

The group is developing a health system in Afghanistan and chose to study AHCCCS after hearing it has been a model for other Medicaid systems in the United States, said Lorie Mayer, executive consultant in the Office of the Director.

"We tried to provide information about building an infrastructure, she said. "They were very impressed, but we've been going about this for 20 years compared to them just starting."

The group of about 12 met with AHCCCS Director Tony Rodgers, Chief Medical Officer Dr. Marc Leib, Medical Director Dr. Anita Murcko and Kate Aurelius, assistant director for the agency's Division of Health Care Management.



Health care professionals from Afghanistan pose with Kate Aurelius, (second from right) assistant director for AHCCCS' Division of Health Care Management.



News

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April 9-10.

The annual expo is one of the largest held at the Phoenix Civic Center, drawing thousands of people over the two days. Informational booths and vendors ranged from Avon to Bashas grocery stores to a "natural" coffee supplier. PIO staff and volunteers from DMS and Healthcare Group explained how the governor's Copper Card can give seniors and the disabled substantial discounts on prescriptions. AHCCCS is helping the Governor's Office with marketing of the card.

"The Women's Expo was a key place to market the Copper Card program because we were primarily trying to reach the children of seniors who need help with pharmacy discounts," said Frank Lopez, PIO. "We call them 'caretaker' children, mostly Baby Boomers. They have a heavy hand in helping their parents navigate through the bureaucracy of Medicare and other government services."

Along with the brochures, AHCCCS staff members dis-

tributed flyers, question-and-answer leaflets and contact information.

Job fair a success for agency member services division

The AHCCCS Division of Member Services conducted more than 100 on-the-spot interviews at a May 7 job fair held at the Arizona state fairgrounds in Phoenix.

"We ended up having to stop. We had to cut things off so we could get caught up," said Denise Fiore, DMS administrative services administrator. "Our booth was right where (job hunters) first walked in and more than 2,000 people attended the job fair."

The fair was a state-agency only affair, with 23 agencies represented. DMS was the only AHCCCS division taking applications.



Saving water earns agency award from Governor

Members of the AHCCCS Facilities unit in the Division of Business and Finance received an award from the Governor's Office for their work on an agency water conservation project.

Because of the team's efforts, AHCCCS reduced water usage by 15 percent in seven months and received the Governor's Award for Energy Efficiency in April. The agency also saved more than \$3,400 in those seven months.

Team members include (from left) Lester Lazzell, Raul Quinonez, Russel Keener and Gary Callahan. Contracts and Purchasing Administrator Michael Veit (not pictured) is team sponsor.

